

Forum: Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue # 2 : Means to Address the Social and Cultural Integration of Immigrant Families and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

Student Officer: Alain Navarre

Position: Chair of SOCHUM



Introduction

The process of immigration refers to the relocation of one or multiple individuals to a country with the intention of establishing permanent residence. This action is often a difficult one for immigrant families, as they face the daunting task of adapting to an entirely new social and cultural environment. Upon arrival, immigrant families must adapt to unfamiliar customs, languages, and societal norms while simultaneously striving to maintain their own cultural identities. Despite its potential advantages, immigration also poses a significant

challenge to social balance in the destination country. Often, the failure or difficulty of cultural adaptation results in cultural clashes and, in many cases, the rise of xenophobia and racism, presenting a direct threat to social cohesion.

Over recent decades, geopolitical and social factors, including but not limited to economic globalization, political instability, and armed conflicts, have fostered international migration. In fact, according to the World Migration Report 2024, the global estimate for international migrants in 2020 was 281 million, accounting for 3.6 percent of the total global population. This represents an increase of 128 million compared to the 1990 estimate and three times more than the 1970 estimate.

This sudden growth in international migration has led to heated, controversial debates around immigrant integration policies in destination countries. Some people argue for the complete cultural assimilation of migrants, while others advocate for multiculturalism and diversity, or for a balance between these two ideas. However, due to the growing fear that immigration leads to a loss of job opportunities and a hindering of cultural identity, ideas supporting the complete cultural assimilation of migrants or even their removal from the country and the closing of its borders are gaining substantial popularity. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Secretary-General, “half of Europeans think that refugees are going to take their jobs and social benefits.” As a result, extreme political tendencies that include xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism are also gaining popularity worldwide, posing a threat to global social cohesion.

These extreme ideas frequently overshadow the positive effects that immigration can have within a society. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), immigration can fuel “growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship in both the countries people come from and those they move to.” Resolving this issue is crucial for harnessing the economic and cultural

benefits of immigration while preventing societal tensions and alienation. Successful integration enables social cohesion, fosters mutual understanding and respect between cultures, and allows immigrant families to fully contribute to and participate in their new communities. Therefore, we must strive to find a balanced approach that includes both the preservation of cultural identity for natives and immigrants and successful integration for immigrant families, fostering social cohesion.

Definition of Key Terms

Immigration: Immigration refers to the process by which migrants enter and settle into a new country or region with the intention of establishing permanent residence there.

Emigration: Emigration refers to the process by which migrants leave their native country or region to settle permanently into another area.

Migration: Migration refers to the movement of people from one place to another, either within a country or internationally. Typically, these movements are made in search of better living conditions, or work and studying opportunities. This term encompasses both immigration and emigration.

Cultural identity: Cultural identity refers to the sense of belonging that one has to a certain group, it is based on shared characteristics such as language, values, traditions, religion, and a shared history. It is important to an individual as it helps to shape their self-perception and connection to their heritage.

Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is a social ideology that promotes the coexistence of multiple groups of people with distinct cultural identities within one same community. This ideology implies that each culture should be preserved rather than assimilating them all into one dominant culture.

Assimilation: Assimilation refers to the process by which immigrants adopt cultural and social norms, traditions, and values in their host societies. This process often implies a gradual loss of their own cultural identity and heritage.

Country of origin: The country from which an immigrant is initially from, or from which the immigrant had citizenship before moving to their new country of residence.

Country of destination: The country to which an immigrant moves in order to settle and establish permanent residence. Other terms for it include “host country” or other similar terms.

Social and Cultural Integration: Social and cultural integration refers to the process by which immigrants become incorporated into the society and culture of their host society. Unlike assimilation, it implies the preservation of the immigrant's cultural identity and an adaptation between both immigrants and the host society.

Social Cohesion: Social cohesion refers to the degree of social harmony and unity within a society, that implies strong social bonds, shared values, and a sense of belonging and unity among all of the members of the society in question.

General Overview

Cultural Clashes and Social Norms

Cultural clashes between immigrant families and host societies pose significant challenges to integration and the preservation of social cohesion. These conflicts arise when deeply rooted practices and beliefs of immigrants collide with local norms, causing misunderstandings and social discord. Such

practices often include gender roles and family dynamics, religious practices, and social behaviors. For instance, in recent years, a debate arose in France regarding the ban on religious clothing artifacts in public schools, including the hijab, which were mainly worn by immigrants. This practice conflicted with France's strict secular education policies, resulting in conflicting views and widespread public contention within the society.

Additionally, these cultural differences often lead to a process of physical division and separation between communities within the same country or city. Incentivized by cultural clashes and oftentimes discrimination, immigrant families tend to cluster together in certain neighborhoods, creating ethnic enclaves where they feel more comfortable and supported by their community. While these areas can foster economic integration and provide a sense of belonging, they hinder broader social integration and aggravate the differences and clashes between their cultures and the host society's culture.

Political Polarization and Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

Fueled by the economic and social impact of immigration, coupled with cultural clashes between host communities and immigrant communities, extreme political views regarding immigration have arisen worldwide. These views have been adopted by parties that use anti-immigrant rhetoric to gain power and influence in popular destination countries, proliferating racism and xenophobia, and creating an exclusive and potentially dangerous environment for migrants.

This phenomenon is especially prevalent in Europe, where far-right or right-wing parties such as Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) and France's National Rally have gained significant popularity over the years due to their anti-immigration statements and policies. These parties often use misinformation or misunderstandings regarding immigration as strategies to

increase their political influence. By radicalizing public opinion, they can effectively overshadow the positive effects that immigration brings to the host country.

On social media, this phenomenon is accentuated even further. Online echo chambers, or social environments where individuals encounter information that reinforces their existing beliefs, limit exposure to diverse views and promote stereotypes and radical opinions. This reinforces anti-immigrant sentiments and polarizes the public opinion.

Furthermore, many countries also develop political parties and ideologies aiming for a more multicultural approach that is inclusive and adaptable toward migrants. However, the rapid growth of anti-immigrant parties and ideologies threatens their influence. Additionally, citizens of these countries tend to be polarized, meaning their political views often gravitate toward extremes. This polarization subjects countries to political volatility, leading to radical changes in policies depending on the current government, which equates to a hindering of consistent progress.

Economic Impact and Challenges

One of the main challenges faced by immigrants when adapting to the host societies is often economical integration and their integration to the labor market. Due to many factors including language barriers, non-recognition of foreign credentials, and lack of education, immigrants often find themselves unemployed or have many difficulties in finding employment matching their skillset. Furthermore, this difficulty in finding employment is often also a product of discriminatory hiring practices which are due to stereotyping and misinformation. As stated previously, around half of Europeans believe that refugees will steal employment from them, and this, unfortunately, is a belief that has spread worldwide in recent years. However, these misconceptions and stereotypes overshadow the real economic impact that immigration has on the

host and origin countries, let alone the dependency that some countries' economies have on immigration.

In fact, migrants do not directly represent a threat to the employment of locals, instead, they represent a significant increase in the workforce of a country. According to the OECD in 2016, "over the past 10 years, they accounted for 47% of the increase in the US workforce and 70% in Europe". Additionally migrants that lack education or qualifications tend to fill in jobs in either sectors that are not wanted by locals, or declining sectors of the economy, therefore leading to a more sustainable economy in the country of destination. These contributions to the economy made by migrants are significant, as a matter of fact, the United States Congress stated that "immigrants added \$2 trillion to the U.S. GDP in 2016 and \$458.7 billion to state, local, and federal taxes in 2018" and that "immigrants are highly entrepreneurial, launching new companies at twice the rate of native-born Americans". Therefore, contrary to public belief, this leads the host country to be subjected to an increase in job opportunities for locals, and to a more sustainable economy overall.

Finally, the economic impact of immigration is does not only affect the destination countries, but also has a great impact on the economy of origin countries. Most immigrants, having migrated because of push factors leading them to better work and living opportunities, tend to send remittances to their family members living in their country of origin. Remittances are defined by the IOM as "financial or in-kind transfers made by migrants directly to families or communities in their countries of origin". According to the IOM's World Migration Report 2024, remittances accounted for about \$831 billion in 2022. These remittances have an impact on local economies as they allow for the family members living in poor conditions to improve their lifestyle and have entrepreneurial opportunities, which in turn allows for an overall improvement in

living conditions in the origin country.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

European Union (EU)

The European Union constitutes, in its vast majority, most of the popular destination countries for migrants both because of its location and its economic prosperity. Some of these countries include France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. As a result, over the recent decades, due to an increase in political instability in neighboring regions (mainly Africa, but also Southeastern Asia), it has seen a rapid growth in terms of immigration. Additionally, the EU has also been marked by a wave of intra-european migration following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2020. The EU has adopted policies striving for the improvement of methods regarding the integration of immigrant families. For instance, they implemented the Action Plan on Integration And Inclusion 2021-2027, which strives for inclusive education and training, better employment opportunities, equal access to health, and adequate, affordable housing for immigrants.

However, threatening these measures, the EU is also seeing a rapid growth of anti-immigrant far-right parties within its member states and the organization itself. Following the most recent EU Parliament elections, which resulted in a victory for the far-right populist movements, the future of progress regarding migration policies in the EU is uncertain.

United States of America (USA)

Historically, the USA has always been a highly important hub for migration and its culture and economy were significantly impacted by these flows of migration. However, its approach regarding the adaptation and integration of

immigrants and immigrant families has varied over the years. It has always followed an approach to migration that has been heavily directed towards the assimilation of migrants into their dominant culture. However, in recent years, cultural diversity, although controversial, has started to be seen as a positive element to society, and therefore, the country is slowly being directed towards a multicultural approach. Migration to the United States is mainly constituted by either international students or highly qualified workers looking for better work opportunities, or immigrants from Latin American countries with unstable political or economic status.

In terms of policies, the United States government has been subjected to a lot of political volatility which has hindered progress regarding the implementation of policies. However, the country still strives to include migrants in many ways including their Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which makes children that have illegally migrated to the US and that meet some criteria eligible for deferred action, which is an immigration status allowing them to stay in the country for longer.

African Union (AU)

The African Union is an intergovernmental organism consisting of nearly all African countries. Most of the AU's member states are marked by political and economic instability, which leads to their populations constituting a large part of immigrants worldwide. As a direct consequence of this, countries in the AU experience both intra-African migration and emigration as their natives leave in search of better work and life opportunities typically in European countries.

India

The Republic of India presents a unique case in which it is both a major origin and destination country for immigrants. For neighboring and close African countries that are affected by political or economic instability, India is one of the

most popular destinations for immigration, as its emergence and development can provide them with a horizon of opportunities both socially and economically. However, India is also characterized by its emigration due to overpopulation, sometimes poor living conditions, but mostly because of international work and studying opportunities. In fact, according to the Economist, “the Indian diaspora has been the largest in the world since 2010” with almost 18 million Indians living abroad. Due to the country’s multicultural population, India has had to face obstacles related to the integration of both international and national immigrants.

Timeline of Events

- 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act passed in the United States, abolishing national origin quotas and leading to increased immigration from Asia and Latin America.
- 1985 Schengen Agreement signed, which created Europe's Schengen Zone with open borders between member countries and facilitated immigration policies.
- 2004 The European Union expands to include 10 new member states, leading to increased intra-EU migration.
- 2011 Arab Spring uprisings spark a refugee crisis, with millions fleeing to Europe.
- 2016 UN New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants aims to improve integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants.
- 2018 UN Global Compact for Migration adopted to establish a framework for international collaboration regarding the management of

migration.

- 2020 COVID-19 pandemic disrupts migration patterns globally and exacerbates integration challenges.
- 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine triggers a massive flow of over 8 million Ukrainian refugees, primarily into neighboring European countries.
- 2024 The EU Parliament elections result in a majority of seats for the far-right populist movements, rendering the future of immigration policies uncertain.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN has been actively involved regarding the issue of social integration of immigrants and immigrant families into their host societies. Having acknowledged the difficulties that immigrant families go through in order to successfully feel a sense of belonging in their new communities, the UN has taken action in order to develop international frameworks for collaboration in the hopes of facilitating this process for migrants. A landmark development was the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants by all 193 UN Member States on September 19, 2016. This declaration recognized the need for an international comprehensive approach to human migration and aims to enhance cooperation regarding migration on a global scale.

On this foundation, the UN General Assembly proceeded to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on December 19, 2018. While not legally binding, this compact provides a complete framework for international cooperation on all aspects related to migration. Objectives of this compact encompass that of socially integrating immigrants into the host societies through the creation of “conducive conditions that empower all

migrants to become active members of society” and the “commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance, against migrants and their families” as stated by the compact itself. Furthermore, this compact also aims to ensure equal rights for migrants to access basic services in their host countries.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The UN's involvement in terms of resolutions and treaties adopted has been effective in the sense that it has provided a logical, complete and comprehensive framework for the international cooperation and acknowledging needed in order to facilitate the integration process for immigrants. These measures will continue to help and support the issue at hand by incentivizing all of its member states to establish national and intergovernmental measures to help immigrants. However, these attempts have their limitations as the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants lacked specific actionable commitments that the member states would have to implement. On the other hand, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, while specific, has a non-legally-binding nature which limits its enforceability and does not directly require measures to be implemented by the UN's member states.

Possible Solutions

When engineering solutions, it is essential to approach the issue in a way that allows for both the immigrant and the host society' cultures to coexist in a multicultural and diverse environment. To achieve this, it is important to promote an inclusive and understanding mindset to be adopted by both parties in order

to hopefully achieve a state of mutual understanding, acknowledgement and appreciation for the other's culture, thus fostering social cohesion. One way in which this could be accomplished is through education. By promoting an inclusive and culturally diverse environment in the school system, younger generations can be sensitized towards the issue, therefore forging a more accepting and welcoming mindset towards immigrants facilitating their integration. Additionally, language and social programs could be implemented into schools that allow for migrant students to integrate not only the school's social environment but also the host society overall.

Another issue that hinders the integration of immigrants into their new social environments is the discrimination that they face upon arrival to the host society. As explained previously, xenophobia and racism against immigrants is mainly due to a series of misconceptions due to the spread of misinformation or misunderstandings. Therefore a solution to effectively reduce this discrimination could be to implement stronger news networks that could provide updated, accurate information that prevents the spread of misconceptions regarding immigration.

Finally, to foster an inclusive, multicultural society, exchanges between both cultures to achieve mutual understanding is necessary. Therefore, governments could implement programs that include gatherings or group activities that unite both locals and immigrants in the hopes of creating a stronger sense of social unity and exchange.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The social and cultural integration of immigrant families is closely related to SDG 10, aiming to reduce inequality within and among countries. Specifically, target 10.7 calls for facilitating "orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration

and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies." These migration policies, if successfully implemented, could encompass the facilitation of social integration for immigrants as they could ensure equal access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and more. Moreover, promoting social cohesion and combating discrimination against immigrants aligns with the broader goal of reducing inequalities based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status. Therefore, the promotion of social cohesion through the facilitation of social integration for immigrants directly results in the reducing of inequalities within and among countries, therefore relating to SDG 10.

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Appendix

- I. The interactive website for the World Migration Report 2024; will lay out a few key concepts as well as providing useful information, numbers and statistics.
 - A. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/msite/wmr-2024-interactive/>
- II. A video by CNBC International that explains the impact that migration has on the economy.
 - A. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0dVfDiSrFo>
- III. A TED talk about assimilation and integration that provides useful insight into these concepts as well as a testimony from an immigrant.
 - A. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N72HDNP38E0>